Why Our Man in Laos Runs An Opium Den, P. 3

Look Who Now Laments The Decline of Moscow's Power in South-East Asia

"Washington, May 29—The most dangerous new element in the foreign policy crisis now confronting President Johnson is the resounding collapse of Russian power in Southeast Asia. . . . For nearly a decade—from the fall of Dienbienphu *in 1954 until last year—Russia was a significant* power in the East-West pulling and hauling over Southeast Asia. Indeed it was the major Communist military presence in Laos, where Soviet planes were busy airlifting supplies to the Pathet Lao rebel forces.

"Russia played the game hard, and against America's best interests. But it contributed on the whole a stabilizing influence highly valued by U.S. officials . . . a restraining influence on North Vietnam, for a while, even on Red China. For example, Moscow played a key role in checking the Pathet Lao grab for Laos in 1962, when a direct collision with the U.S. threatened. The Soviet also helped Amer*ican negotiators engineer the patchwork Geneva agreement* on Laos, then worked to put it into effect. . . .

"American Kremlinologists regard Russia's present noisy declarations of support for the Communist effort in southeast Asia as just a smoke-screen. They feel this is Moscow's way of confessing that it is really no longer in a position to influence its old partners. . . . This fact greatly complicates and limits the choices of action for the U.S."

—*Michael O'Neill's Capitol Stuff column in the Neanderthalish right-wing* New York Daily News *May 30.*

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Some Truths About Laos Adlai Helped to Hide

Adlai Stevenson's speech to the Security Council on Southeast Asia was a moral disaster. He deserves better employment than reading the repellant scripts of the State Department. Once before on Cuba, as now again on Indochina, he found himself assigned the defense of the indefensible. Morse was right when he told the Senate last Thursday that the speech "extinguished a light of world statesmanship," and that Stevenson should have resigned rather than make it. Morse was particularly disturbed, in view of the growing speculation about the use of nuclear weapons, because Stevenson declared the U.S. ready to "take whatever means are necessary" to enforce its will in Southeast Asia. As an exercise in the disingenuous and the palpably false the Stevenson speech topped even McNamara's March 26 address on Vietnam to the National Security Industrial Association. A striking example pointed out by Morse: Stevenson cited the special report by the Indian and Canadian members of the International Control Commission in June, 1962, accusing North Vietnam of violating the Geneva accords by armed aid to the South Vietnamese rebels. Stevenson did not mention that the report also accused the U.S. of violating those accords by its military activity in South Vietnam! We had a right to expect something better from a man like Stevenson.

Three Rightist Coup d'Etats

Stevenson spoke of the alternation of periods of calm with periods of limited aggression in Laos. He failed to mention that the "periods of calm" have been broken by the intrigues of our military-intelligence establishment. The recent outburst of fighting was a reaction to the third attempt by the rightist military on our payroll (Laos was long the only country in the world whose Army was entirely paid by the U.S.) to overthrow a coalition regime headed by Souvanna Phouma. The first time was in 1958, the second in 1960. Morse told the Senate we should have taken our case against the violation of the Geneva accords in Laos to the United Nations.

What If The Mistake Had Been Made With An Atom Bomb A La Goldwater?

"Cha La, South Vietnam, May 25—At six one morning about two weeks ago, an Air Force plane swept low over Cha La. What followed was one of the more tragic mistakes of the war in South Vietnam. Major Victor Chandler of Austin, Tex., watched in shocked dismay as a plane whipped back and forth over the rice paddies and pineapple groves on which Cha La depends for its prosperity. Major Chandler recognized it immediately as a defoliation plane. Obviously the pilot had misread the map. Plant-killing chemicals intended for enemy country deeper South sprayed the ground below. Major Chandler's shouted protests went unheard.

"That, Col. Jim Keirsey of Durant, Okla., senior adviser to a South Vietnamese division, said grimly later on, was the last defoliation mission flown on the Ca Mau peninsula—until we get some things straightened out. But that does not save Cha La's paddies and pineapple growers. Today their green is slowly turning to brown, and the months ahead look bleak indeed. Cha La is the outpost we have selected to turn into a model town."

—*Jim G. Lucas in the Scripps-Howard press May 25.*

In his judgment the U.S. "has a case it can prove" in an international investigation. The fact is that our first effort to overthrow Souvanna Phouma *has* been investigated and by a committee of our own Congress. In the spring of 1959 the subcommittee on foreign operations of the House Government Operations Committee took 984 pages of testimony on what we were doing in Laos. They showed gross violation of the Geneva accords by the United States.

The Geneva accords provided for free elections to reunite Laos as well as Vietnam. We blocked free elections in Vietnam but failed in Laos. In the spring of 1958 elections reunited the northwestern provinces under Pathet Lao control

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(Continued from Page One)

with the rest of the country. A coalition government was formed under Souvanna Phouma and the Pathet Lao troops taken into the Royal Lao Army. The U.S. used its power to overthrow Souvanna Phouma and set up a military dictatorship. The Leftists were purged from the Parliament, the Pathet Lao troops thrown into concentration camps and their leader Prince Souphanouvong, Souvanna Phouma's half-brother, was jailed on trumped up charges of treason. The troops and the Prince both broke out, and renewed rebellion with them.

We Overthrow Phouma Again

Souvanna Phouma came back to power again in 1960 in the wake of a revolt by a parachute Colonel, Kong Le, disaffected by the corruption whose roots in the U.S. aid and military program were uncovered in the 1959 investigation. Souvanna Phouma again set up a coalition Cabinet intended to reunite the country. He offered the post of Deputy Premier and Minister of the Interior to our favored military man, Gen. Phoumi Nosavan. But Nosavan with the support of the U.S. and Thailand began a military revolt instead. Its failure led the U.S. to agree to the 1962 Geneva conference at which a new coalition government was set up under Souvanna Phouma. Our military and intelligence agencies caused the Kennedy Administration a lot of trouble during the prolonged negotiations; they opposed a new coalition Cabinet; the were never reconciled to it. The rightist military they favored overthrew Souvanna Phouma again in the coup of April 19.

The U.S. reacted quickly against the coup—it could hardly have done otherwise in view of the united opposition by Moscow and London—and forced the reinstatement of Souvanna Phouma as Premier. But it would be a mistake to believe that this put a happy ending on the affair. The U.S. military in South Vietnam was as hostile to the neutralist regime in Laos as in Cambodia. Just as those who favor neutralization believe it must be applied to the whole region so the military see the existence of neutralist regimes in part of the region as a bad example for war-weary South Vietnam. The U.S. has allowed the men who made the coup to remain the real power in Laos. They have sought to achieve their aims more subtly and to use Souvanna Phouma as their front and captive. The U.S. which shut off aid in 1958 and 1960 to overthrow Souvanna Phouma has not cut it off this time to force the rebel Generals out of power.

Those Invaders From Red China

"Pro-rightist Meo tribesmen have captured two Communist Chinese soldiers in Phongsaly Province in the far north of Laos. . . . This was the first definite evidence that there are Red Chinese troops in Laos. . . . One of the captured Chinese is said to be an officer, and the other is a sergeant. Both men, in their 20s, were wearing Chinese uniforms when captured."

—UPI from Vientiane in Washington Daily News *May 23, which played it under banner headlines on page one "First Evidence of Chinese Red Troops in Laos."*

"Coupled with Kong Le's indictment of the North Vietnamese was a report by a Western observer that right-wing troops at Paksane are holding two men who were found to be carrying Communist Chinese documents when they were captured by Meo guerrillas in northern Laos. He said he was shown the captives and the soldiers told him they were an officer and a noncom but did not say whether they were Chinese."

—AP from Vientiane in Washington Post *May 24.*

"The Vientiane headquarters of the right-wing army claimed a wave of terror followed the capture of two Chinese Communist soldiers in the northwest corner of Laos bordering China. The right-wing official bulletin, Laos Presse, said that Communist Chinese authorities, together with the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese, arrested all village and district leaders and people in the area and killed and tortured many.

"The right-wing army had claimed the two Chinese were captured May 8 in Muong Sing, 20 miles southeast of the Chinese frontier. The two men were reportedly brought to Vientiane, but Western newsmen have not been able to find them."

—AP from Vientiane in Washington Star *May 27.*

Calmer View of The Laotian Fighting Taken By The Responsible British Press

"Recent advances by the Left-Wing Pathet Lao forces in Laos have certainly jolted this part of Southeast Asia, but after visiting Laos and Siam as well as South Vietnam in the last two weeks it is possible to suggest that the Pathet Lao's immediate territorial objectives are probably more limited than appear from a distance. . . .

"1. Regaining all territory lost or threatened by earlier Right-wing probes since 1962. . . . Right-wing advances there last year had threatened, and occasionally cut, the main Pathet Lao supply line from North Vietnam.

"2. Establishing complete control over the central Plain of Jars, where until recently the whole of the neutralist army of 9,000 men and some units of the Right-wing forces were said to be 'dug in.' . . . Since the coup, the Right-wing forces had been deliberately withdrawn in the hope that the Pathet Lao would not attack the purely neutralist force, but the Pathet Lao have preferred to take the opportuniy to gain an even easier victory than usual with the excuse that under the new Vientiane regime 'neutralists' no longer exist except on their side—to which some have indeed defected. . . .

"They may be poised now to demand objective No. 3—the reconvention of the Geneva conference of 14 nations to consider the Right-wing breach of the 1962 agreements, followed by a restitution of a 'coalition Government' on their own terms."

—The Guardian *(London) from Saigon, May 21.*

"The critical situation which developed last week in Laos after the pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces occupied the neutralist headquarters in the Plain of Jars seemed to have eased somewhat by the week-end. The situation, both on the spot and diplomatically, remained confused, but the tone of the Chinese press showed that Peking supports Prince Souphanouvong, the Pathet Lao leader, in declaring that he wishes merely to restore the situation as it was before the recent Right-wing coup in Vientiane and to have the declared amalgamation of Right-wing and neutralist forces cancelled. Both China and the Pathet Lao appear, therefore, to be content to consolidate their recent gains in the Plain of Jars, and to be working for a restoration of tripartite coalition government in Laos."

—Diplomatic Correspondent, The Times *(London) May 25.*

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The Generals insisted that Souvanna Phouma agree to reorganize his Cabinet, to appoint new members named by the military and to merge the neutralist forces with the rightists. He agreed over the protests of the Pathet Lao. On May 16 the Pathet Lao attacked and took the neutralist headquarters on the Plain of Jars. Souvanna Phouma in a press conference two days later (*Le Monde,* May 20) disclosed that he had been warned by Prince Souphanouvong that the Pathet Lao would attack if he agreed to these changes particularly the merger of the armed forces. Indeed Peking claims that the attack was a revolt by neutralist troops objecting to the merger. *Le Monde* (May 19) in reporting the attack said that "of the ten battalions of Leftist troops which have participated since Saturday in the offensive on the Plain of Jars, six came from the neutralist camp and even constituted, so one is told officially, the elite troops." These battalions passed over to the Pathet Lao, *Le Monde* reported "because they rejected the integration of the armed forces decided upon by Prince Souvanna Phouma in the wake of the rightist coup d'etat."

Notorious for False Battle Reports

Whether an uprising or an attack, the fighting seems to have ended with resumption by the Left of the control it had over the Plain of Jars before the cease-fire of June, 1962. These movements were not much more than skirmishes with few casualties, and indeed little contact between the opposing forces. The neutralists with Kong Le seem to have withdrawn as soon as shelling began, or even when hostile forces appeared in the neighborhood. But all this has been blown up in the headlines of the U.S. press as if it were a major war. Laos is not very accessible to the outside world. Few reporters get to Vientiane. Fewer still ever get to see a battlefield. They are dependent for their information on the military, local and U.S., in rightist-controlled Vientiane. These have made Laos notorious for exaggerated battle reports.

In 1959 false reports of North Vietnamese and Chinese invasions created a crisis atmosphere on the eve of Khrushchev's visit to Eisenhower but when a United Nations commission investigated it could find no evidence of these supposed incursions. Then in June 1962 another crisis was generated by false reports that the Pathet Lao were marching on Thailand; Lao troops fled in panic across the Mekong river but reporters, when they arrived in their wake, could find no trace of the invading army. Now again the dispatches fed the headlines with reports of invading Red Chinese and North Vietnamese. Proof of the former seems to have evaporated (see box top of page two) while the only proof of the latter we have seen was an *AP* dispatch from Vientiane in the *Baltimore Sun* May 30 which quoted some villagers near the Plain of Jars as saying that Communist North Vietnamese must have been among troops they encountered because "military commissary agents bought two dogs as well as rice and chickens from them and this proved foreigners were among the Red soldiers because Laotians do not eat dogs." On such rubbish the peace of the world may hang.

Some Merger

"Although the coup of right-wing generals had dissolved somewhat under pressure from Western governments, it did result in a merger of neutralist and right-wing armies."

—Washington Sunday Star's Weekly Summary, May 24

"Vientiane, May 21 (AP)—Still unused in the fight against the Pathet Lao is a rightist army of about 50,000 troops, allies of the neutralists in the coalition government. Military authorities said it was impossible for the rightists to move from garrison centers in the major towns without leaving vital routes open to the pro-Communists and that air transport necessary to carry out a sufficiently rapid reinforcing move was not available."

—New York Times, May 22.

"Thus far Laotian army right-wing forces haven't been heard from. They are concentrated mostly in the Laotian panhandle. Their combat record is, to put it charitably, undistinguished."

—Keyes Beech of the Chicago Daily News Service from Vientiane in the Washington Post May 27.

Why Our Favorite General in Laos Opened A Gambling Joint And An Opium Den

"Phoumi Nosavan is 44 years old. No one questions his intelligence, his guile and his political sense. . . . He linked his fortunes to those of Prince Boun Oum and the Americans. When Boun Oum disappeared from the political scene two years ago, Phoumi Nosavan entered the coalition government of Prince Souvanna Phouma and patiently began the slow process of regaining his place as the No. 1 man in Vientiane. Last year Phoumi Nosavan hesitated. The Americans had left, drying up the source of those dollars without which the hundred and twenty Generals of the nationalist army [which General Phoumi commands—IFS] would not remain faithful. What to do? Play the neutralist game? Or bring about so anarchic a situation in Laos that the Americans would have to intervene directly? . . .

"In the meantime, a thunder clap in Saigon. Last November 1, a group of Generals overthrew the Diem regime. In Vientiane Phoumi was worried. He had a great many Generals around him. Some of them might be tempted to adventure politically. It was necessary to calm the impatient, and for that to find money.

"One then witnessed at Vientiane some remarkable financial operations. To begin with the abattoirs of the capital, which are very profitable, were assigned to the military. Then—again for the profit of the army—Phoumi Nosavan authorized the opening of a gambling house. One could play there at roulette, dice or dominoes. The Asian passion for gambling emptied the pockets of Vientiane inhabitants for the profit of the General Staff. . . .

"Finally, the latest monopoly of the military in Vientiane: an opium den. It is the only one in the whole world which exists legally. Since its opening, it has always been full. It is very primitive, but contains 150 cots. A pipe costs 70 kips, that is to say about 100 old francs [about 20 cents]. That is not much when one smokes only two or three; it is a great deal when one smokes 50 or 100 pipes. The money rolls in.

"To forestall the expected criticism from their American allies, the Vientiane military hit upon a wonderfully clever idea. They put a placard over the doorway of the opium den: 'Clinic for The Cure of Addicts'."

—G. Penchenier, well known French writer on military and South-East Asian affairs in Le Monde *(Paris) May 24-25, one of a series of four articles (also May 23, 27 and 28) on the three Indochinese States we recommend highly.*

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A Sad Footnote to Nehru's Death; The Supreme Court's Belated Action on Loyalty Oaths

Dr. Leo Szilard Matched His Humanity to His Science

Dr. Leo Szilard helped to create The Bomb and then spent most of his life trying to save humanity from it. He rose, as if by sheer will, from what was supposed to have been his death bed from cancer to found the Council for A Liveable World. He set his fellow scientists and his fellow men a noble example. We mourn his passage. . . .

To all that outpouring of sorrow and eloquence about Nehru we would add only a small, sad note of our own. When Nehru last appeared May 16 before the central Committee of the Congress party, he was given an ovation. But when he ended (so London's *Peace News* noted May 22) there was meagre applause. He had spoken of his hopes for peace with Pakistan and he had dwelt with sorrow on the violence done to Moslems by the Hindus in India. So long as Gandhi and Nehru led the Hindus against the British, they were adored. But when they tried to restrain the evil passions of their own people: Gandhi was shot by a Hindu religious fanatic. Nehru's last public reception was cold. . . .

The Height of Treason

More shocking than any Southern mob is the record remorselessly set forth by Mr. Justice Harlan for a unanimous Supreme Court in *NAACP v. Alabama.* For here Alabama's best people, its judges and highest law officers, stand convicted of conspiring to abuse basic concepts of fair trial for eight years in their campaign to outlaw the NAACP. Among the charges against the NAACP, along with aid to the Montgomery bus boycott, was that it tried to pressure the Governor of Pennsylvania and the Penn State football team into "a boycott of the Alabama football team!" This was the very peak of its high treason. . . .

Two notions, one simple-minded, the other sinister, lay behind the wave of loyalty oath legislation which inundated this country in recent cold war years. One was that "subversives" would be inhibited from their "subversion" by a loyalty oath; the other was that the vagueness of these oaths would make it easy to punish non-conformity by perjury prosecution. The Supreme Court's 7-to-2 decision in the State of Washington cases (see box this page) recognizes the threat of such oaths to First Amendment rights. It is a pity our highest tribunal in the regrettable years of the witch hunt was not as clear-sighted as it is now, when the country is coming out from under this nonsense. Mr. Justice Clark dissenting (with Mr. Justice Harlan) indicates the magnitude of this recovery when he protests that in 1951 the Court unanimously affirmed a Maryland Act (the notorious Ober law) "written in language identical" with Washington's. Clark also protested that the language of the Washington statute was no more vague than that upheld by the Court that same year of 1951 when it validated the Smith Act intended to outlaw the Communists. "Where," Clark asks plaintively, "does this leave the constitutionality of the Smith Act?" A good question.

Loyalty Oaths and the First Amendment

"A teacher must swear that he is not a subversive person. . . . The Communist Party is declared in the statute to be a subversive organization. Does the statute reach endorsement for Communist candidates for office? Does it reach a lawyer who represents the Communist Party or anyone who supports any cause supported by the Communist Party? . . . Is it subversive activity to attend international convention of mathematicians and exchange views with scholars from Communist countries? Would any person supporting peaceful but far-reaching amendments be engaged in subversive activity? Could one support participation by this country in a world government? We also conclude that the 1931 oath offends due process because of vagueness. The oath exacts a promise that the affiant will, by precept and example, promote respect for the flag and the institutions of the U.S. and the State of Washington. . . . The oath may prevent a professor from criticizing his state judicial system or the Supreme Court. . . . Or it might be deemed to proscribe advocating the abolition of the Civil Rights Commission, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, or foreign aid."

—Mr. Justice White invalidating loyalty oaths required by the State of Washington for teachers and other public employes.

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